

Washington, DC -- On Tuesday, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7), a former 3-Star Admiral and the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. Congress, delivered opening remarks on the house floor during the Iraq debate. The resolution (H.Con.Res. 63) disapproves of the decision of the President announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq. Joe was asked to speak for two minutes by the House Leadership to kick off the debate on the resolution. This will not count against his allotted five minutes, he will use on the floor later this week.

“As this essential debate begins today, I am honored to be asked to make opening remarks at its beginning. I served in our military for over three decades, entering in the Vietnam War and serving under Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and our Commander in Chief today, President Bush. I had the honor to have led men and women in harms way – the highest honor that our nation can give anyone -- most recently in Combat over Afghanistan and Iraq, where I commanded an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 ships and 15,000 sailors. Having worn the cloth of this nation so long, I know the duty of choice that the citizens of this great country have about the future course of this war in Iraq is not an unpatriotic one, nor is what anyone will say unpatriotic in the next few days. If my 31 years in the military taught me anything, it was that we serve in this all-volunteer military to defend Americans’ freedom to think as they please, and to say what they think, even if they disagree with their leaders. A democracy is based on freedom of expression, and those who join the military do so to fight, if necessary, the wars which defend that freedom—hoping that our use will be to a wise end.

“That is what concerns me about Iraq: the continuing use of our national treasure in what is an inconclusive, open-ended involvement within a country where the long term benefits do not match what we need to reap. It is why I am opposed to a troop surge that doubles down on a bad military bet, that has been tried already. We need to apply our resources elsewhere in the world: where terrorists come from -- including Osama bin Laden, who is still on the loose – or where emerging nations, such as in the Western Pacific, have growing political and economic interests, and therefore influence, that may challenge ours. I do not think my extensive military experience alone gives me license to disagree with our strategy in Iraq, but just being an American who has closely watched and thought about the tradeoff in benefits for our future prosperity, interests and values—does. Our military is a national treasure that should not be used recklessly, nor should it be hoarded like miser’s gold. It is a vital resource if we are to continue to be a force for peace and prosperity — but throughout the world. Therefore, I firmly believe in a planned end to our military engagement in Iraq within the next year as the primary catalyst for change in Iraq, so their leaders are forced to accept the political and military responsibility for their country -- with our diplomatic and economic help, and limited military support, from outside Iraq but within the region. It is for our nation’s greater security that I believe this, and why I cannot support a troop surge that strains our military readiness further, and more, our overall strategic security, in a war that does not serve our nation’s greater

interests in this world... in our future."

On February 8th, Joe introduced the "Enhancing America's Security through Redeployment from Iraq Act," which **sets a deliberate timetable for the redeployment of United States Armed forces from Iraq by the end of 2007 in order to best address America's security interests both at home and abroad.**

**In order to better address our global security interest and to improve the readiness of our Armed Forces, this binding legislation requires that:**

All United States Armed Forces serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom shall be redeployed outside of Iraq, to locations within the Middle East or Southwest Asia regions, to other regions of the world, or returned to the United States, by December 31, 2007, with the exception of:

- Special Operations Forces assigned outside of Iraq that conduct either targeted counter-terrorism operations or periodic support operations of the Iraqi security forces in Iraq.
- Members of the Air Force and Naval Forces assigned to locations within the Middle East region, but outside of Iraq for the purposes of conducting air operations (including air operations in support of combat operations) to support the Iraqi Armed Forces.
- Targeted counter-terrorism operations.

Funds for Operation Iraqi Freedom spent after December 31st, 2007, may only be used for the purpose of providing funding for the personnel and activities listed above.

The redeployment of Armed Forces under the "Enhancing America's Security through Redeployment from Iraq Act" shall be carried out at a deliberate, orderly pace that allows the full security of the members of our Armed Forces.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security*

*Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. Congress.*

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